

Shropshire Council

Annual Service User Diversity Report 2017 2018

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A. Introduction

I. Our county and its people

Shropshire is the second largest inland county in England, after Wiltshire, and one of the most sparsely populated counties. There is just under one person per hectare (0.98 persons; 313,400 population; source ONS mid year estimates 2016), for a terrain covering 319,736 hectares. The physical terrain and limited number of arterial routes pose practical challenges in terms of digital and physical infrastructure, as well as the high service delivery costs and access issues associated with a dispersed and ageing population.

Around 34% of Shropshire's population lives in villages, hamlets and dwellings dispersed throughout the countryside. The remainder live in one of the 17 market towns and key centres of varying size, including Ludlow in the south and Oswestry in the north, or in Shrewsbury, the central county town.

All inhabitants expect equitable access to services, facilities, learning and training opportunities, and support and advice mechanisms, including online. However, the reality is that digital connectivity remains an issue for the county as for other rural counties.

Shropshire is a relatively affluent location, albeit with pockets of deprivation, but in terms of access to services, it is amongst the most deprived localities in the country.

The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 [IMD 2015] data is provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (© Crown Copyright 2017). It provides an indication of deprivation at Lower Super Output Area [LSOA] level, a small area statistical geography. The Barriers to Housing and Services Domain is one of several domains which focus on a particular type of deprivation. The scores from this domain contribute 9.3% towards the overall IMD 2015.

The Barriers to Housing and Services Domain contains two sub-domains, Geographical Barriers and Wider Barriers. The largest influence over Shropshire's position in the LSOA rankings is the Geographical Barriers sub-domain, which focuses on the travelling distances by road from selected facilities and services. Of Shropshire's 193 LSOAs, 65 are within the most 10% deprived areas of the country according to this sub-domain.

Whilst there are nine national Protected Characteristics with regard to groupings of people in the community, as set out under the Equality Act 2010, the Council accordingly has a tenth one, around social inclusion.

The social inclusion category is intended to help the Council to think as carefully and completely as possible about all Shropshire groups and communities, including people in rural areas and people that may be described as vulnerable, for example due to low income or to safeguarding concerns.

It is for this reason that the annual service user diversity report has a focus upon social inclusion as well as on equality and diversity, in terms of activity and progress in the last calendar year.

B. Equality and diversity

I. Context: the legislative framework in which we operate

The **Equality Act 2010**, together with the Human Rights Act 1998 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, forms a framework of protection for equality, diversity, social inclusion and human rights.

Shropshire Council seeks to ensure that, like other public authorities, it is compliant with the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**. This **Duty**, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, may be described as the duty on a public authority, when carrying out its functions, to have what is called **due regard** to three equality aims.

These equality aims are listed below.

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations

As a local authority, we must comply with both a general equality duty and with specific duties, as set out in the Act.

- To demonstrate full compliance with the general duty, we are required to publish annual information about our workforce and service user diversity.
- To demonstrate full compliance with the specific duties, we are required to publish one or more equality objectives which we think we should achieve.

The frequency for these objectives to be published is a minimum of every four years. The **Equality Objectives Action Plan 2016/2020**, approved by Cabinet in 2016, enables positioning of the Council to assist in efforts to meet its PSED, seek to demonstrate good practice in so doing, and facilitate timely links with other corporate policy and strategy development

The regulations also specify that a listed authority must publish its equality information and equality objectives in a manner which is accessible to the public and may publish this information within another published document. Our diversity reports are on the Council website, along with the equality objectives action plan for 2016 to 2020. These are in the section on “equality, diversity and social inclusion”, along with further background and complementary information about this policy area.

We have set out our corporate equality actions across the following three areas, and are reporting on them accordingly:

- Publish equality and diversity information more visibly
- Collect and analyse equality and diversity data more proactively

- Work jointly with partner organisations on equality-related issues

The Equality Act describes a number of **Protected Characteristics** groupings ie characteristics that people may share. Local authorities such as ourselves and other public sector organisations are obliged under the Public Sector Equality Duty to have due regard to the needs of people in these groupings in our decision making processes. The nine groups are, in alphabetical order:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion and belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation.

As in previous years, we are taking specific Protected Characteristics to look at in this report. Having looked at Gender, Sexual Orientation and Marriage and Civil Partnership last year, this year we are taking the opportunity to share examples of current and future activity around Age and at Disability.

II. Equality Action Areas

II.i. Publish equality and diversity information more visibly

The following case studies focus on our overall approach towards equality, diversity and social inclusion, in terms of how we seek to meet the obligations placed upon us in ways that will support us in open and transparent decision-making and behaviours, to the benefit of service users and communities.

In so doing, they set out to complement the Council's continued efforts to maintain a visible presence on the Council website about equality, diversity and social inclusion, both as a reference source on activity and as guidance on practical assistance.

Case study: the picture in 2018 Equality, diversity and social inclusion development of our workforce

In terms of **publishing equality information more visibly**, one of the most important things for the Council to visibly demonstrate as a responsible employer are the attitudes and behaviours of staff as well as elected Members with regard to equality and diversity. With this in mind, an online training tool was developed and tested with a range of staff, prior to being rolled out as a mandatory course for all staff from 30th November 2018.

The online offering has a focus on the national Protected Characteristic grouping of Disability, enabling staff to think about different aspects of this in their working lives, including with regard to mental health and well being.

The course complements training delivered to Councillors in relation to equality and diversity, and efforts around making them aware of the information already available and being developed about their communities, via area profiles, town profiles, and place shaping endeavours such as the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan.

It also forms an integral component of the overall approach towards employee development, as outlined in the extract below from the sister report to this one, on workforce diversity:

4.0 Development of employees

- 4.1 *2017 saw the introduction of an online learning and development tool rolled out across the Council. Employees can request and book themselves on to training courses, with the approval of their line Manager. There is now a mix of face to face and online training courses, which continues to grow, making learning and development much more accessible to all employees enabling a greater flexibility on when and where employees can access training modules.*
- 4.2 *In addition to the introduction of the on line learning tool, the Council has launched an apprenticeship framework incorporating 600+ apprenticeship standards and 15 apprenticeship providers. The providers are a mix of both local and national and offer flexibility in the way they will deliver apprenticeships to meet the needs of the organisation as well as working with us to develop apprenticeships for the future and providing a greater flexibility to all employees in accessing apprenticeships.*
- 4.3 *As notified in 2017, the Council has joined the national Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network which commits to making a change to the diversity and inclusion of apprenticeships both internally and externally, improving social mobility while building a skilled, diverse workforce.*
- 4.4 *Corporate objectives include providing opportunities for our Looked After Children (LAC), clients with learning difficulties (part of a national Pacesetter project) and supporting Managers and Leaders within the organisation. Directorate Management Teams have been drafting Workforce Plans which identify the future skills required of the workforce and using the apprenticeship levy to fund this where possible.*

Case study: looking forward to 2019 Wider use and publication of ESIIAs

As part of collecting and analysing equality data to help with service area policy decisions, staff are advised through this online training that they may find that they need to produce or help with a document called an equality impact assessment. We call our approach an Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA). These ESIIAs tend to be completed to accompany reports to Cabinet about a proposed service change, but may also be carried out at any time by a service area as an internal stock take or screening of likely positive or negative impacts in equality terms for a potential service change. A standard template is used for this purpose to aid consistency.

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services.

In Shropshire, our approach is to think as carefully and completely as possible about all Shropshire groups and communities. We demonstrate equal treatment to people who are in these groups and to people who are not, through having what is termed 'due regard' to their needs and views when developing and implementing policy and strategy and when commissioning, procuring, arranging or delivering services.

We can all help to do this by engaging with service users, members of the public and other organisations, and by collecting equality information that is accurate and up to date. This can then go into ESIIAs as evidence, and should make it 'easier' and more transparent for everyone to see that decisions are being thought about in terms of likely equality and diversity impacts. We could alternatively develop a policy or working practice however we like: but if it is not grounded in equality evidence it may not be a sound policy and it could even mean that the Council is open to legal action.

The use of ESIIAs is continuing to grow, and the opportunity has been taken to revise and refresh the standard template, partly to enable the Council to include provision for service areas to record wider societal, economic and environmental impacts that may be predicted or anticipated for a service change, and partly to more visibly record where ESIIAs have been carried out at timely stages in the development of service policy or strategy. For example, the Council's Local Plan Partial Review has now been through three formal stages of public consultation, with a screening ESIIA carried out at each stage.

II.ii. Collect and analyse data more proactively

Turning to the **proactive collection and analysis of evidence**, the Council continues to provide support through the Commissioning Support Unit, to help service areas. This may be through expertise and support with regard to surveys and ongoing engagement work; research and identification of comparator authorities or approaches; analysis of equalities data; or support to service areas from the Rurality and Equalities Specialist with regard to Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessments (ESIIAs), when consideration is being given to a service change.

Case study: the picture in 2018 Collection and use of survey and consultation data

Service areas need to ensure that due consideration is given to collection of equality data, in ways will be proportionate and non-intrusive, in order that greater insight may be gained into the needs and aspirations of communities and businesses in Shropshire.

This is particularly so when carrying out surveys and engagement work. This information then becomes source material evidence for ESIIAs, to help in the assessment of the likely negative or positive impact of service changes or policies and any mitigating measures to mitigate or enhance such impacts. It is reported to Cabinet accordingly alongside committee reports, to aid decision making processes.

The Council's feedback and insight team collates and analyses survey data, including equality data that has been collected for these and other surveys and consultations.

Recent examples included the survey and consultation work that went into the development of Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy, which had a focus upon access to outdoors activities and amenities particularly for people with disabilities, and on the strategic work through Children's Services around Early Help and current location of children's centres across Shropshire and other outlets for provision of intervention, support and early help work with families. This had a focus upon children and young people and families. The two Protected Characteristics of most relevance here for comment were therefore Disability and Age.

The collection of equality data was recognised by these two service areas as being an integral component of what was being planned in both instances, in order to inform and shape strategic work in ways that would seek to meet the needs of people in these groupings and improve overall policy outcomes.

The information that was collected was recorded in the ESIIAs in both instances, forming separate detailed appendices to the relevant Cabinet reports. It gives pointers on how it can usefully be drawn upon to develop actions for further ongoing engagement with all groupings in the community, not only for those for whom there is a clear policy focus, but also for other groupings, particularly where low responses have been received from people in these groupings in the specific consultation exercises carried out to date.

There will continue to be efforts to encourage service areas to involve the corporate team in survey and consultation work, and in so doing contribute towards a robust evidence base that may then inform policy and strategy development by service areas, and enhance the overall ability of the Council to make decisions that are as grounded in as complete a picture as possible about communities and businesses in Shropshire.

Great Outdoors Strategy

The consultation ran for 3 months from the 3th May 2018 to the 31st July. The Strategy was generated as a result of engagement with key stakeholders and the public consultation was designed to gather views relating to the Strategy and to inform next steps for implementation.

54 people completed the consultation survey and 4 detailed written responses were received. The findings highlighted that, of the 54, 36 (67%) survey respondents had read the Strategy document, and as a result were able to make informed comments on the Strategy content. The 4 written responses highlighted that all had carefully read and considered the document.

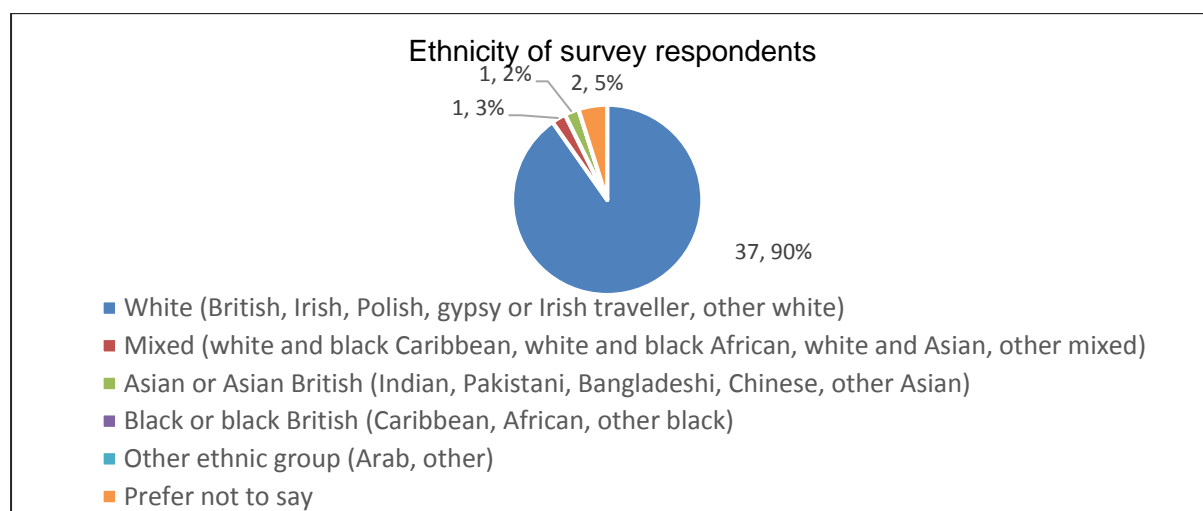
Understanding who has responded to the consultation is important to assess how well the views of different stakeholder groups have been considered. This information complements the Equalities and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA).

Of the 54 survey respondents 6 were representatives of an organisation and the remainder responded as individuals. The four written responses were all from groups or organisations.

There was a fairly even spread of responses from men and women. Survey respondents tended to be from the 45+ age groups rather than younger ages but there were responses from all age groups with the exception of the 15-19 year old and group and the 85+ age group.

The Great Outdoors Strategy included consideration of access for people with disabilities and so the survey respondents were asked if their day to day activities were limited because of a health problem or disability. The responses highlighted that 8 of the survey respondents have a disability and 4 of those indicated their disability was physical. Respondents did not particularly highlight any access concerns within the survey responses but all comments will be closely considered.

Other characteristics considered to maintain a focus on equality included employment status and ethnicity. The results for the latter are shown in the chart below.



- The survey respondents do not all fall within the same categories so are possibly more representative of the whole population.
- The home or business location of survey respondents was also gathered in order to test whether or not people from across Shropshire had the opportunity to participate in the consultation and share their views. The map suggests there is a good geographical spread of responses but no responses were received from the rural south west of the county.
- Responses were received from a range of age groups, locations and people with different characteristics so they appear to be relatively representative of the wider population. The responses received suggest an overall agreement with the contents of the strategy, its targets and priorities.

The findings from the public consultation, alongside those from stakeholders, indicated support from the wider community for the Strategy and therefore an endorsement of the view taken in the initial ESIIA.

This is that the Strategy sets out to have a positive impact across the Protected Characteristic groupings, particularly the groupings for Age, with regard to children, and Disability, with regard to all ages and with regard to seen and unseen disabilities. This will itself then include older people, given the ageing demographic profile of the county.

A positive impact is also anticipated for groupings including people with caring responsibilities, as well as those at risk of social exclusion. Efforts were made during consultation on the draft Strategy to seek views from communities as well as from stakeholders. Impact had not for example been able to be assessed ahead of consultation with regard to Race, for people whose first language is not English, including tourists as well as residents. However, some data has now been obtained.

As no responses were received from the rural south west of the county, a proposed action going forward will be to seek to engage with and work with not only rural communities across the county but also those in this area in particular, in order to seek to achieve the Strategy outcomes for all groupings in the community including rural households and businesses.

The Council will also work in particular with the other groupings that were under represented in the survey responses ie the 15-19 year olds and the over 85's. This will also help the Council and partners to pick up on equality related matters identified as gaps in the Strategy, which would assist positive outcomes for these age groups as well as for people in the Disability groupings. The Strategy prioritises work with children and young people and with older age groups, so communication and engagement with these groupings is of particular importance.

It is recognised that there will need to be ongoing efforts to engage with people in the Protected Characteristic groupings. Links may usefully also be made with specific target groups such as children and families, people with mental health problems, and people with physical disabilities, through projects and partnership initiatives already under way. Actions may then be more readily identified from evidence gathered to enhance the positive impact of the Strategy for these groupings, leading to better outcomes overall for communities in Shropshire.

Early Help Family Hub Strategy

What is it about?

An Early Help Family Hub is a place where children, young people and their families can access help and support in times of need. There will be a range of services available co-ordinated via the hubs. Some will be available only to those in greatest need but there also be services available to any family, child or young person who needs them (for example, parenting groups, sessions to support young people's mental health, and employment advice). The delivery model includes a continuum of Early Help provided by a range of services and organisations at all levels of need.

These Early Help services and this type of activity are already delivered in a range of facilities across Shropshire, including families' homes, health centres and community centres. Early Help hubs will bring together support services including children's centres, targeted youth and parenting support, as well as commissioned services, health and voluntary sector partners and local schools. They will work across community clusters and work with other local partners and the community, to offer services for children and young people aged 0 – 19 (25 SEND) and their families.

Family hubs will be inclusive for all, which includes support for children with additional needs. Working in locality bases will promote better information sharing networks, ensuring children and families no longer go missing between services, making the most of the financial resources available.

Throughout the journey to get to this point ie final approval of hub bases - analysis of data has been significant to understand the needs of vulnerable families, identify local needs, based on levels of deprivation, given where the majority of families with complex needs live. This evidence of need has been used to propose where the likely sites for Family Hubs are required and how outreach services will be delivered.

The **first stage of consultation** on a new Early Help delivery model for children, young people and their families took place during February and March 2018 for six weeks. It comprised an online questionnaire (paper copies were also available) and a number of public and partner workshop sessions held across the county.

186 respondents (including service users and representatives of an organisation) completed a questionnaire and 273 people attended a workshop session. The results showed that whilst some areas (such as Oswestry, River Rea, Severn Valley and Shropshire Hills) were very well represented, other areas saw very low representation, namely Pebble Brook, Mortimer Forest, South Oswestry and Ellesmere & Wem.

The analysis of the stage one consultation indicated gaps to usefully address within the second phase of the consultation: these are of relevance with regard to equality and to social inclusion, with potential impacts for rural households.

- The analysis highlighted geographical gaps, and desirability of gathering more feedback from Pebble Brook, Mortimer Forest, South Oswestry, and Ellesmere & Wem Children's Centre areas.
- Men were not well represented among the stage 1 respondents.
- Responses were very focused on Children's Centres. Is more feedback required from the wider range of Early Help services and support?
- Although partners were involved in the consultation they were not represented in significant numbers considering the wide range of organisations with an interest in Early Help.
- It may be that there are groups within the community with specific needs or characteristics who need to be consulted within more specifically. For example should work take place to ensure Shropshire's Armed Forces communities are engaged with under the Armed Forces Covenant?

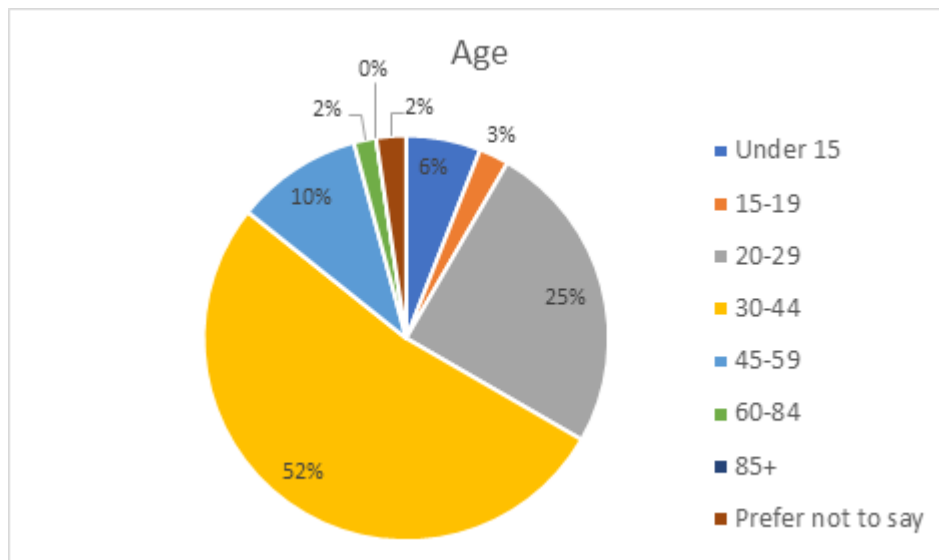
- Problems with the online questionnaire mean that it is difficult to get an accurate profile of respondents. Have parents of children in a range of age groups been consulted?
- The analysis suggests that only a very small proportion of survey respondents were unemployed. Does this mean that few low income families have been included in the Stage 1 consultation.

It was recommended that the design of the Stage 2 consultation works to overcome the gaps highlighted above, ie geographical, where venues in central South Shropshire and South East Shropshire could be used within the Stage 2 consultation, and efforts to engage with particular Social Groups. Groups with Protected Characteristics and High Risk Groups (Men, Young Parent/Carers, Children and young people) should form a focus within Stage 2. It was also felt that strong themes within the comments are universal access to support, equality of access and how vulnerable will be defined. This should be recognised and responded to in stage two.

Consultation feedback – summary of key themes

Following Cabinet approval in May 2018 the **second stage of consultation** took place May to July 2018 for six weeks. It comprised an online and paper questionnaire and 24 drop in sessions and workshops held across the county which explored proposed sites for six Early Help Family Hubs and the removal of children’s centre services from 20 existing sites. The second stage was very much informed by the gap analysis and recommendations arising from the first stage.

461 people took part in the consultation (including service users, representatives of organisations and young people): 269 respondents completed a questionnaire, 158 people attended one of 19 drop in sessions and 35 young people attended 5 workshops (10 also completed a questionnaire). The chart shows the split by age.



Hub location and service provision feedback

Overall, respondents were more positive than negative about the proposed 6 family hub sites; averaging 40% in agreement as opposed to 31% who disagreed with the proposed sites. Support was highest for the Oswestry venue where 46% of respondents were in agreement. Where people objected, 26%, one in four objectors were from the Market Drayton Children's Centre area. 40% of respondents agreed with Whitchurch as an area for a proposed hub, however 36% disagreed – over half of these were from the Market Drayton Children's Centre area.

In Shrewsbury, 37% of respondents agreed to the proposed family hub site at Richmond House, 36% disagreed. 39% of respondents agreed with the Crowmoor Centre and 33% disagreed. In the main, objectors were from the Shropshire Hills and Market Drayton Children's Centre areas.

The highest number of respondents to the consultation, 27%, were from the Market Drayton area. It could be analysed that respondents from Market Drayton objected to other venues being Early Help Hubs – because there wasn't a hub proposed for their area and this was reflected in the face to face consultations. In the south of the county, 40% of respondents agreed with the Rockspring Centre as the proposed hub in Ludlow, with 28% in disagreement. 39% of respondents were in agreement with Bridgnorth, with 28% disagreeing with the proposal.

Parents, particularly women with young children, expressed concern that the proposals would impact negatively on some universal services – notably universal stay and play. This reinforced the feedback received in the first round of consultation. However, parents and carers also suggested that they would be willing to pay to attend a stay and play should it be provided and on average parents and carers considered £2.39 to be reasonable.

Respondents also cited the difficulty of having to travel to hubs to receive a service – poor public transport was cited as an obstacle but also the distance, time and cost involved.

Access to advice and information feedback

Almost three quarters (74%) of respondents said they would be quite or very likely to use Facebook to look or ask for information about early help. Also popular sources of information are the health visitor, Family Information Service web pages and Early Help web pages. Young people said they would most likely use Facebook or Twitter for information about Early Help Services.

Overall Commentary

The consultation highlighted the need to include a seventh Early Help Family Hub, located in Market Drayton, based on the strength of public views on the levels of need in this area. The Early Help team undertook further analysis of the current referrals and demand for Early Help Services mapped against contacts and referrals to children's social care and concurred with the feedback received.

Therefore, Market Drayton will require an Early Help Family base, as well as Whitchurch, taking the number of Early Help bases to 7. The Early Help Team alongside the Corporate Landlord have identified Raven House in Market Drayton as a base. At present there isn't a suitable venue/base to house the Early Help Team in Whitchurch. The team will continue to offer targeted home visits to those families in greatest need and all other lower level Early Help services already in place will continue to be delivered in the Whitchurch area.

Case study: looking forward to 2019 The Ageing Society Grand Challenge

Local strategic activity has been carried out by the lead service area in Shropshire Council with responsibility for adult social care, with a resultant Adult Social Care Strategy now published.

Links may usefully also be made with the Council's Digital Transformation Programme, and related ongoing activity around transforming digital connectivity including infrastructure, mobile coverage and business digitisation, along with partners in the Marches subregion and with Government Departments. Additionally, whilst the impact of Brexit is as yet uncertain, given ongoing negotiations at national and international level, the Council undertook a stocktake exercise earlier on this year.

This was through an all-party Councillor Working Group set up to consider the overall challenges and opportunities of Brexit for sectors of significance within Shropshire and the Marches subregion. It focussed on considering a range of scenarios, along with hearing from a number of people and examining the evidence available at that time. It has also met this November to reflect further on scenarios, following the announcement by the Prime Minister of a withdrawal deal with the EU, which remains subject to parliamentary approval.

As well as identifying a pragmatic need for strengthening liaison work across the border with Welsh authorities, irrespective of the future direction of the United Kingdom's relationship with the EU, the Group identified two key areas: the agricultural sector, and skills and labour market. The Group concluded its work and reported to the Council's Place Overview Committee on 10th May 2018. The Council has agreed on the need to revisit this work once Brexit ramifications are clearer at national level. Committee papers are available on the Council website at www.shropshire.gov.uk

The Group was apprised of the four Grand Challenges identified by Government in its Industrial Strategy, ie **AI and the data revolution; Clean Growth; Mobility; and Ageing Society**. In Shropshire, the Ageing Society challenges, and thus opportunities as well as risks, are perhaps best exemplified through consideration of the likely impacts for the following two sectors:

- Agricultural/land based sector
- Care sector

Recent examples of equality data research and analysis, in relation to the Protected Characteristic of Age, were reports produced by the Performance Intelligence and Policy Team: “Older People Profile for Shropshire”, October 2017; and “The Economic Impact of Adult Social Care in Shropshire”, February 2018. These became source material for a briefing paper for the Department of Health on the national Industrial Strategy Grand Challenge of an Ageing Society.

The below is an extract from the Council’s response to the House of Lords Rural Economy Committee Inquiry, which is currently in session.

3.3.15 The percentage of the population of Shropshire that are aged 65-84 is 20.3%, which is significantly higher than the England average of 15%. This is national data from the ONS Census 2011 and mid year estimates for 2016.

*3.3.16 The **care sector** is therefore of some significance in Shropshire, not least with regard to employment, where care workers are drawn from Europe as well as England, with consequent implications for this sector identified through the work of the all-party Brexit Working Group. We have also noted commonalities of views on this from the work of the South West Rural Productivity Commission.*

3.3.17 A report produced by the Council in 2017, “The Economic Impact of Adult Social Care in Shropshire”, demonstrates that the Adult Social Care sector makes a significant contribution to the economy of Shropshire, a contribution which will continue to grow as the sector responds to the rising demands for care of an ageing population and for people with a range of long term conditions, especially those in isolated rural communities. Whilst public sector funding constraints have presented challenges to deliver services and meet demand, it also presents the sector with opportunities to develop innovative solutions to further grow the economic and social importance of the care sector in Shropshire.

3.3.18 Headlines from the Council’s report are as follows:

- Nationally, over 4.2 million people are employed in the human health and social care sector. 8% of these are employed in the West Midlands. There are 21,500 people in paid employment in this sector in Shropshire, which is the equivalent of 0.5% of the national total and 6.4% of the regional total. Taken together, the health and social care sector employ more than any other sector both in Shropshire and in the UK.*
- The sector generated Gross Value Added (GVA)¹ to the value of £117,336 million in 2016, of which 7.8% (£9,095 million) was attributable to the West Midlands. The value of the sector in Shropshire is £593 million (6.5% of the West Midlands total).*
- Adult social care accounts for 52.7% of employment in the sector in Shropshire, which equates with 11,300 job, and the economic impact associated with this workforce is estimated at £313 million.*

- *Adult social care contributes a higher level of GVA to the Shropshire economy than agriculture.*
- *Looking more broadly at the adult social care market to include the value of unpaid care as well as the spending power of recipients of those benefits specifically associated with the sector, it is evident that the economic impact is much more far-reaching than the value attributable to those that occupy paid jobs within the sector. The overall value of £647.1 million is the equivalent of more than £2,000 per head of population.*

II. iii Working more jointly

The following case studies focus on age, with regard to working at very local level in schools with younger children, and working at subregional and national level with the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership on the challenges of an ageing demography.

Case study: the picture in 2018: Holocaust Memorial Day work with local schools

A specific **joint working** area around Age, which is also linked to the Protected Characteristic groupings of Religion and Belief, and Race, focusses upon partnership work to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. This is held every year on the 27th January, with a national theme identified each year.

The focus is upon work with primary schools and with inter faith forums to plant a cherry tree each year, in different parts of this very large county, so that over time there will be a cherry tree orchard of remembrance across Shropshire.

The 2018 theme was “The power of words”, and the Portfolio Holder for Communities fronted publicity and promotion of a week-long series of ecumenical ceremonies across the county, including setting off the week with support along with the South Shropshire and Shrewsbury Interfaith Forums for a display at Shirehall.

There were ceremonies at the first tree, planted at Mereside in 2015 in the centre and east of the county, as well as at the 2016 tree in Woodside Academy in Oswestry in the north of the county; the 2017 tree, at Bishop Hooper School in Ashford Carbonell in the south of the county; and the new tree, planted at Trinity School in Ford in the centre and west of the county. Councillors supported these events, with the Portfolio Holder leading the ceremony at Woodside Academy in Oswestry, which closed the week. A cherry tree is therefore now planted at all points of the compass.

The 2019 theme is: “Torn from home”, with preparations well advanced. The 2019 tree will be at St Peter’s School in Wem, as our eyes turn towards the north and west, which, together with trees also planted at a number of secondary schools in 2016, will bring the total number to 10. Links are being made with the support given by the Council to the resettlement in the county of Syrian refugee families, again bringing in the Protected Characteristics of Religion and belief, and Race, as well as the Council policy commitments around social inclusion.

Case study: looking forward to 2019
Working with Marches LEP

The Marches LEP

The Marches LEP is geographically one of the largest in the country, covering 2,300 square miles, and looks west to Wales and across to the West Midlands, as well as north and south to neighbouring areas. As such, the region has a collaborative and collegiate approach to partnership working, typified by the three local authorities of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin working together with business and academia through the LEP and with the Marches Nature Partnership, which acts as environmental sounding board for the LEP.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

In response to a recommendation of the House of Lords Enquiry into operation of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities 2006 Act, Defra is intending to publish a Statement of Rural Research Priorities in December 2018. This Statement, which will focus on wider rural issues rather than farming activity or environmental science, will aim to:

- Set the agenda for government research to support the development, implementation and evaluation of policies impacting on communities and businesses in rural areas;
- Support DEFRA's development of a comprehensive evidence base that enables better rural proofing of government policies;
- Provide a means of influencing the research strategies of the Research Councils and other independent research funders to focus on rural issues.

A response made by Shropshire Council to the NERC Act Inquiry, which very much drew upon collegiate work of the Marches LEP, had sought to emphasise the importance of a comprehensive evidence base that would in turn serve to facilitate better rural proofing of Government policies, and had cited the paucity of up to date evidence and the gaps in the evidence base following the closure of the Commission for Rural Communities.

It was heartening that the Council's view was shared by others and endorsed by the Committee, and it is pleasing to see it now make its way into national rural policy development. This opportunity to further influence Government policy and to therefore help the Marches LEP and the Council and partners, including across the border with the Welsh devolved administration, was therefore one that the Council and its partners through the LEP were keen to exploit.

In order to focus in on the dual perspectives of an ageing society and a rural geography, the following topics, along with others more overtly focussed on economic growth, were put forward to Defra as a Marches LEP response.

Rural economy:

- Care sector and projected growth: recruitment, training and skills challenges;
- Health care diagnostics, devices and testing, driven by data and Artificial Intelligence;
- Innovative products and services to support an ageing workforce;

Future change:

- Digital connectivity and older people, including uptake of online services; telecare and telehealth;
- Use of One Public Estate approaches to land and asset management together with service delivery;
- Mobility and transport innovation e.g. electric vehicles, connected and autonomous vehicles;
- Innovative approaches to energy generation, storage and transmission and clean growth;
- Information technology.

Rural communities:

- Social mobility of young people, including transport to access education and employment, out-migration, and availability of appropriate housing and facilities;
- Role of the voluntary and community sector in providing learning and skilling-up opportunities;

The out-migration of young adults may causally relate in part to poor provision of some services. It could be argued that Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) and parks for families is one such service. The current Government review of greenspace standards could usefully bear in mind the poor provision of accessible greenspace in rural communities. Productivity is related to reduced stress (mental health issues) that access to greenspace helps with. Provisional maps of the need for ANG over the Marches LEP area are available here: <http://bit.ly/ANGSt-Hereford>

In the Marches LEP response to Defra, we commented that future research projects should be based on the LEPs' and Combined Authorities' Local Industrial Strategies and Strategic Economic Plans.

This will enable the following policy imperatives to be addressed:

- Recognise and work with the physical geography of an area;
- Take account of factors that impact upon rural deprivation and how these differ from and/or echo those for urban deprivation, including demographic changes such as an ageing society and social mobility across age groups;
- Factor in the rural and urban interdependencies on transport for communities and businesses, including commuting patterns and supply chain trade routes.

Shropshire Council contextual points

Shropshire Council has commented, in response to the House of Lords Rural Economy Committee Inquiry, on the following points. These will be familiar to LEPs with rural geographies, and are shared with Herefordshire.

- porosity of borders between English local authorities and those of the Welsh devolved administration;
- commonality of transport issues for local authorities in both England and Wales around supply routes to Ireland and Europe, particularly heading towards Brexit, where dependency on key arterial routes presents particular challenges in adverse weather conditions for trade traffic as well as for local commuters and businesses;
- policy drivers including an ageing demographic, reduced opportunities to access services such as banking in our market towns, incomplete digital connectivity, and funding approaches towards physical infrastructure that are currently weighted towards sheer actual weight of traffic and size of roads rather than concepts of road safety, and acceptance of the lack of viable public transport alternatives.
- strategic linkages between the Marches LEP and other LEPs and local authorities through the West Midlands Combined Authority, for example on the welcome news that the WMCA is to be the national 5G digital connectivity testbed, with a focus including health. We have previously volunteered Shropshire as a rural pilot area for 5G in terms of practicalities etc;
- current regional and subregional activity to improve transport corridors including the M54, A5, A49 and the rail network through agencies such as the Midlands Engine and through optimisations of opportunities such as HS2 and consultation on major road networks, to improve supply chain reliability in terms of access to goods and materials as well as to improve mobility for education, employment, leisure and healthcare.

A place-based approach towards future research requires not only an implicit recognition that different policies and strategies will apply to different geographies, demographics and administrations, but also an explicit recognition of the interplay between the five foundations of productivity identified in the Industrial Strategy as "the essential attributes of every successful economy".

By way of reminder, these foundations are, in alpha order:

- Business environment (support for specific sectors and SMEs)
- Ideas (R&D, innovation)
- Infrastructure (broadband, energy, transport)
- People (skills and education)
- Places (tackling regional disparities)

What could Government do to enable the development and dissemination of local evidence?

It is fair to say that the view from the Marches LEP would be that Government needs to encourage universities to do better at communicating the findings of research that they have already undertaken. Universities likewise need to work more closely in partnerships at a local level, whether that is between a university and local businesses, through LEPs or other channels, or between the university and public sector bodies such as local authorities. This would aid in refining and sharpening the focus of research to meet the specific local needs of businesses and communities, and in building upon the repository of evidence already held by LEPs and local authorities and by the universities themselves, and in providing ready channels for dissemination and utilisation of findings.

C. Social inclusion: focus on rurality

I. Context: presenting the case for equity for rural authorities

One of our challenges as a local authority is to articulate rural issues at national level, and in so doing to seek to shape national policy in ways that will benefit all our communities and indeed all those who visit, live and work here in Shropshire. The Council has accordingly taken timely opportunities to communicate not only these challenges but also the initiatives and approaches being taken by the Council, and the support that the Council and its partners seek in continuing local efforts to address such issues.

One example of this was the recent submission made by the Council to the ongoing House of Lords Rural Economy Committee Inquiry. Graham Biggs, for the Rural Services Network (RSN) of which we are members, has also given oral evidence to this Committee, referring to Shropshire in his very first comments and thus serving to further highlight Shropshire on a national stage.

This included his points that there is “no such thing as a rural economy” as well as reference to the Government’s Fair Funding Review, for which publication is awaited. The following facts are of particular pertinence with regard to equality, equity and rurality:

On the rural economy

“There is no such thing as the rural economy. In each county and in each LEP area, there are many economies that happen to operate in rural areas. Indeed, where I come from in Shropshire, the economies that operate in the north of Shropshire are very different from those in the south. To the extent that the Government listen on rural economies, they do not listen with a fine enough grain to pick up those differences and nuances.

“A lot of business activity in rural areas appears to go unseen by policymakers. There are many sole traders and many businesses that employ very few, if any, employees. SMEs are a massive proportion of the rural economy. Rural family businesses are a massive part of the rural economy, and they would certainly cite

issues such as digital connectivity, poor infrastructure and retail being ignored in the industrial strategy. There are issues with pubs, skills and training, all things that impact massively rural family businesses, which appear to get no sort of traction at all in government thinking.”

On fair funding

Baroness Pitkeathley: “Graham, if you want to give us your views, could you also mention the fair funding review and how you think that has or has not delivered a fair deal for rural areas?”

Graham Biggs: “It has not delivered anything yet, because it has not yet reported, and the jury is still out. We are hopeful, and we certainly see signs at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and indeed among colleagues across local government, that there are some rural issues that need to be grasped, such as the cost of providing services in rural areas.

“For services that the public rely on and that are funded from public money, a major problem at the moment, and over the last few years, has been the austerity cuts and the fact that, historically, rural areas have been majorly underfunded in comparison with urban areas.

“Urban authorities receive some 40% more per head of population than their rural counterparts. I am certainly not arguing that it should be a tenet of public policy that everybody gets the same per head, which would be nonsense, but the gap is too big.

“Combined with the elderly population in rural areas, and the increase in that elderly population, particularly those who are 85 plus, when social care is needed, arrangements for those individuals are far more expensive and probably more complicated.

“We are seeing a situation where so much of the budgets of county councils and unitary authorities has to go into meeting their statutory duties that, although there are other things they know that they ought to do, they simply do not have the resource. That is why some of the publicly subsidised bus services have gone. I agree absolutely with David: we certainly cannot imagine a situation where 32-seater buses are going up and down the lanes all the time, but the resource to help communities to help themselves has gone, in large measure because it is a discretionary cost.

“The fair funding review must first of all grapple with adult social care funding; then, to repeat what Margaret Clark said at the end of her session, we need fair distribution of whatever resources the country can make available to fund local government services. We are looking for nothing more than that: a simple and fair distribution that is sufficiently open and transparent that it can be seen to be fair.”

Such points need to be made in ways that complement the activity of other rural authorities and LEPs with rural constituencies, in order to make good use of collective evidence, resources and expertise by working in partnership and on a collegiate and collaborative level wherever possible.

The Council has been proactive in the last year in making submissions to calls for evidence through the County Councils Network (CCN) as well as the RSN, and similarly with Herefordshire and Telford and Wrekin Councils and through the Marches LEP, thereby seeking to strengthen the case for fairer funding and equity of access to facilities and services for communities in our rural areas and our market towns, in comparison with those in more urban and densely populated areas.

In recent feedback to Government about national policy development, on the Agriculture Command Paper and the Industrial Strategy, we have collectively sought to emphasise the need for robust evidence about communities and their needs, and to articulate concerns that rural evidence does not appear adequately factored in to proposed policy intentions.

We have commented on the associated desirability of utilising rural proofing and other impact assessments tools to strengthen policy and make best use of evidence, in social, economic and environmental terms, as well as the need for alignment of central government budgets and policies.

II. Action areas

Case study: the picture in 2018 Transport in rural areas

The following extract, from the Council's submission to the House of Lords Rural Economy Committee inquiry sets out current challenges and potential solutions with regard to transport.

Q4. How can access to transport be improved in rural areas?

3.2.1 Transport poses practical challenges within Shropshire and across its borders to Cheshire and Staffordshire to the north, Wales to the west, Herefordshire and Worcestershire to the south and east, and across its eastern flank to Telford and Wrekin and the West Midlands. This is due to dependence on key arterial road routes that are liable to flooding, limited public transport, and nature of the often hilly terrain. High transport costs and service delivery costs arise accordingly, given these digital and physical challenges, not only for householders and businesses but also for commissioners and providers of services including adult social care and community mental health care.

3.2.2 Consequential impacts upon social mobility, where we have made response to the APPG Inquiry into Social Mobility in Rural Counties, are thus not of our own making as a local authority, but could in our view to some extent be minimised through factors such as fair funding for rural authorities, including recognition of the need for national investment in roads that to us are major and routes that to us are essential. More urban-biased criteria such as congestion simply do not recognise rural realities including unlit roads.

3.2.3 Just 15.8% of households in Shropshire do not have a car compared with 25.8% nationally. They are, however, an economic and social necessity, given limited public transport options and lack of assured digital connectivity for education, study, business and social usage. Cars are also a major drain on personal finances, exacerbated by lack of rural garages and fuel poverty considerations for households where the prospects of higher waged employment are in any case lower than in more urban environments.

3.2.4 Whilst projects such as the 'Wheels to Work' scheme have positive benefits, this also does not mask either the costs of actually learning to drive, or the recognised higher incidence of road traffic accidents for young people on the rural roads of England (Source: Road Safety Analysis; "Rural Young Drivers Research"; Michelin, 2013).

3.2.5 The Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy has identified strategic corridors and growth zones linked to the strategic infrastructure network:

- The M54 and rail link between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton. As part of this the Council has commissioned an assessment of the opportunities for growth along the corridor;
- A5 west growth corridor including Oswestry, the second largest market town, which is in the north of the county;
- Central Shropshire with major development in Shrewsbury. This serves a much wider catchment including Mid Wales with opportunities within Shrewsbury Town Centre and major employment sites including two Sustainable Urban Extensions. The Shrewsbury West Sustainable Urban Extension proposals include the construction of the Oxon Link Rd which has potential to be extended to form part of the larger North West Relief Rd relieving congestion around Shrewsbury. The Council successfully bid for a feasibility study funding for the North West Relief Rd albeit was unsuccessful in a follow up bid for construction;
- North East Shropshire and the A41, linking to the M54, which is linked to Whitchurch and Market Drayton and the HS2 hub at Crewe;
- A49 for strategic north south road and rail links that connect Craven Arms, Ludlow, and Church Stretton in the south with the proposed Crewe Hub and to Herefordshire including Leominster and Hereford.

3.2.6 The Council also concurs with the response on transport being made to the Committee by Herefordshire Council. This sets out in some detail the work of the Marches and Mid Wales Joint Appraisal Framework commission, which is seeking to build on the recommendations of the Marches and Mid Wales Freight Strategy produced in March 2018. The Freight Strategy had identified a number of different types of road scheme that would improve rural road transport: the JAF commission has developed an appraisal framework to prioritise these different types of intervention to help in setting a long term investment plan. The appraisal criteria included delivery against a number of economic growth and community and environmental objectives as well as scheme value for money and deliverability:

By way of an update, with reference to major development in Shrewsbury, and the Council's successful bid for a feasibility study funding for the North West Relief Rd, (<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/roads-and-highways/roadworks-and-road-closures/large-scale-project-works/north-west-relief-road/>), the Council continues to actively promote the scheme to DfT with local Member and MP support. We restated our ability to deliver on the submitted five year plan to completion, in a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport from the Portfolio Holder December 2018.

Case study: looking forward to 2019
Building a robust evidence base on rurality

Shropshire Council was one of 18 rural local authorities to submit information to a call for evidence from the County Council Network (CCN) and County All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) inquiry, with regard to social mobility. It was pleasing that we were subsequently cited in their report, published on 31st October 2018, as follows:

In their evidence, Shropshire Council said that with regard to rural communities and services:

"The paucity of the information and the lack of recent data render it equally apparent to us that this is a policy area where national government and local government would be well served through the commissioning of a comprehensive piece of research. This could then help to shape and deliver effective policy, to achieve not only the national outcomes in the Government's Industrial Strategy and associated Government policy, but also the local outcomes we have identified for our own communities and businesses in liaison with our LEP and other stakeholders."

The report outlines concerns that 'hidden' and small pockets of deprivation in our areas, a perception that counties are 'affluent', and additional costs of delivering rural services, have contributed to the underfunding of county areas. Moreover, lower funding has meant county council services are increasingly being focussed on social care services, making it harder for counties to support social mobility through early intervention, transport and economic growth services. The report recommends that:

"Counties' ambitions to deliver better social mobility are often hampered by the funding pressures they are under. As a result, the government should ensure that the Fair Funding Review delivers a more equitable share of funding for shire counties, in particular using new indicators to better recognise deprivation and rural delivery costs."

We were further cited as follows:

"Shropshire Council said in relation to deprivation that they are:

"A relatively affluent location, albeit with pockets of deprivation, but in terms of access to services, it is amongst the most deprived localities in the country. Of Shropshire's 193 Lower Level Super Output Areas, 65 are within the most 10% deprived areas of the country according to the geographical barriers to services sub-domain of the 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation".

The report goes on to make this recommendation:

“The Social Mobility Commission highlighted the challenge of delivering social mobility in rural and coastal communities. In response, Defra and MHCLG should work on behalf of government and commission further work in what is holding back social mobility in rural and coastal areas and what would help to drive it forward.”

D. Concluding Remarks

This annual service user diversity report forms part of efforts to continue to increase the depth, breadth and focus of the evidence base about the people who live and work in Shropshire. This helps the Council to maintain its strategic and service area level data in order to be positioned to meet ambitions around public sector reform, asset management, and devolution, and challenges including emerging impacts of Brexit, the quest for fair funding for rural authorities, and the changing demography of the county.

Together with its sister report on workforce diversity, these tandem reports set out to share information and statistics about the diversity of Shropshire Council’s service users and communities, and to complement each other. This is not least as the workforce is largely drawn from local communities who therefore experience the services of the Council in their day to day lives.

We hope that you have found this report to be interesting and useful, and look forward to taking this and other opportunities to continue to report on progress in meeting our local equality objectives, and in so doing serving to aid achievement of the national equality aims.

These equality aims are listed below in final reminder of this shared endeavour, and are followed by tables that sets out the Protected Characteristic groupings and our additional one around social inclusion, alongside current service area information examples.

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations

Table one: this is a table to show the ten groupings of people whose needs Shropshire Council thinks about in particular in its decision making processes

Main definitions source: *Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)*

Protected Characteristic	Definition
Age	Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).
Disability	A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Gender reassignment	The process of transitioning from one gender to another.
Marriage and civil partnership	In England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple. [1]. This is also true in Scotland where relevant legislation has been brought into force. [2]. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).
Pregnancy and maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
Race	Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Protected Characteristic	Definition
Religion and belief	Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
Sex	A man or a woman
Sexual orientation	Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.
Social inclusion (additional grouping in Shropshire)	Families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people considered to be vulnerable, ie having complex needs and/or requiring additional support

[1] Section 1, Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013; [2] Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014.

Table two: this is a table to show the ten groupings in Shropshire, along with examples of information sources for service areas.

Protected Characteristic and other groups in Shropshire	Examples of information sources for service areas
Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg young person with disability)	Adult social care data; Blue Badge records; Census 2011 profiles; children's centre data; concessionary fare records; housing services data; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)	Adult social care data; Blue Badge records; Census 2011 profiles; concessionary fare records; housing services data; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Customer complaints and comments data; national proxy data
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Housing services data; Registrar records
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Housing services data; Registrar records
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)	Adult social care data; Census 2011 profiles; children's centre data; concessionary fare records; housing services data; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)	Adult social care data; Census 2011 profile; Housing services data; Registrar records
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Adult social care data; Blue Badge records; Census 2011 profiles; children's centre data; concessionary fare records; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)	Customer complaints and comments data; drug and alcohol service customer records; national proxy data
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people you consider to be vulnerable)	Adoption and fostering data; Adult social care data; benefits customer data; children's centre data; housing services data; leisure facilities usage; planning policy records eg Place Plans